

the Heart of the Matter



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Keeping our Children Safe from Harm

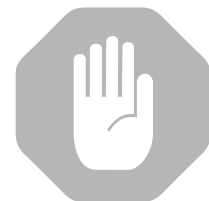
Course for keeping children safe from harm in church and community.

an initiative of the SCWA Coalition

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The Heart of the Matter – Keeping our Children Safe from Harm

Course for keeping children safe from harm in church and community.

INFORMATION AND GUIDE FOR FACILITATOR

Welcome

This course of seven modules is designed to help church leaders and workers keep children safe from harm in a church and community context.

It is especially designed for pastors and other church leaders who may be approached by members of their congregation with concerns about witchcraft or curses against their family, and where children in the household have been suspected or accused.

It will help pastors to understand such a scenario from a biblical perspective, and enables them to handle the situation with sensitivity, while seeking the best interests of the child.

Overview

Context

Our churches should be safe places for children, where they can flourish within the family and in the community of faith. The Church should be a place where children are encouraged to grow in faith, free from fear and full of hope. Our desire is to safeguard the wellbeing of all children, and this sets the broad context for this course. Quality child protection policies and practices help to create a positive environment for children to be nurtured within the community of faith.

In any community where life is challenging, in a society where fears of curses are high and accusations of witchcraft are common, children may find themselves caught up in the dynamic of recriminations, being under suspicion, or accused by members of the extended family. Or parents and guardians may find themselves pressured by a diviner or self-proclaimed prophet into making accusations against children in their household.

Equally, pastors and church leaders may find themselves called upon to confirm or refute accusations that have been made. This puts them in the delicate position of having to arbitrate, and yet at the same time feeling the pressure to fulfil the expectations of others

The Heart of the Matter

who have invested in them as a spiritual authority figure. This course is designed to help with these situations.

Theme

So the primary underlying theme for the course is accusations of witchcraft against children. However, we have been careful not to state this as the focus at the outset, or in the course title, as for some people this may present a barrier to getting involved. We anticipate that this will emerge as an issue as the participants engage with the activities in the first modules.

In contexts where witchcraft accusations are made against others, there is a belief in an unseen world of the supernatural which connects seamlessly with our physical world. In this context, there is great fear of “witchcraft” and of “witches” who act to cause harm across these two worlds. In this training, we are looking at these beliefs using the following definitions:

- “A witch” is a person accused by a diviner (or by someone taking on the role of a diviner) of having caused harm or a problem for another person by using *innate, malevolent powers*. “A witch” intentionally does harm to others, *in secret* and often under cover of night.
- “Witchcraft” is these *innate, secret malevolent powers*.

Not only children come under suspicion and accusation of witchcraft. We are aware that in some communities, elderly people, widows, even pastors are sometimes accused. Learning from this course may be applicable more broadly, but our particular concern here is for children’s wellbeing.

Purpose

The ultimate aim of this course is to contribute to a significant change in thinking and actions in local churches and communities in relation to the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations, especially against children.

The intent is to explore in depth the context in which such suspicions and accusations arise, and to provide biblical insights which serve to improve understanding of the issue. In turn this will lead to responses which are practical, healthy and appropriate, and which avoid causing further harm or stigmatisation to the child.

The ideal outcome of a practical response is to resolve any underlying fears or threats, whether real or perceived, and to restore the child to the family and the community without any stigma, either latent or expressed.

Purpose in summary: the course aims to...

- explore in depth the context in which suspicions and accusations of witchcraft made against children arise;
- provide biblical insights which serve to improve understanding;

The Heart of the Matter

- develop practical, responses which are healthy and restorative and avoid causing further harm or stigmatisation to the child.

Practical responses developed as a result of this course will seek to...

- resolve any underlying fears or threats;
- restore the child to the family and the community;
- stop accusations of witchcraft against children and the terrible consequences that flow from such accusations;
- create a safe environment where children can flourish.

Audience

Although the training is initially aimed at pastors and leaders in the church and community, it is anticipated that the insights gained and practices learnt will be shared widely with congregations, families, local communities, and through neighbourhood support networks, wherever they exist.

All who serve as educators and advocates for children will also find this training to be of benefit in their work.

Audience in summary: course intended for...

- pastors and leaders in the church;
- leaders in the community;
- educators and advocates for children.

...and insights gained to be shared...

- with congregations;
- with families and community members;
- through neighbourhood support networks.

Outline

In this course, there are seven modules each up to about three and a half hours (210 minutes) in length, depending on time allowed between activities for light refreshments or comfort breaks.

It is recommended that the modules are ideally run together as a single intensive course over several days (approximately five days), rather than run as separate modules over a longer period. It is, however, recognised that this may not always be possible in which case the modules should be held as close together in time as is practicable. This ensures that participants get the benefit of the full course. It also reduces the likelihood of a person attending only a few of the modules, and so failing to get a complete grasp of the key principles and good practice.

As stated, the ultimate aim is to bring about a shift in thinking and actions. Each module has distinct objectives which combine toward the overall purpose. Here is a brief outline of the course.

Course Outline

1. **Children as Gifts of God:**

By the end of this module the participants will recognise that children are a gift from God, created in His image and for whom God has a clear plan and purpose.

2. **Personal Responsibility and the Tendency to Put the Blame on Others:**

By the end of this module, the participants will have a better understanding of the root causes of accusations of witchcraft made against children and particularly of the need to take personal responsibility for our decisions and actions.

3. **Normal Child Development and the Impact of Trauma:**

In this module, we consider some of the supposed 'signs' of witchcraft, which lead to accusations of witchcraft made against the children. By the end of this module, the participants will have a better understanding of normal child development, and the effects of trauma on development.

4. **Spiritual Powers:**

In this module we look at fear, with reference to the sovereignty of God and the spiritual consequences of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross; and the Bible's teaching concerning 'witchcraft'.

5. **The Role of Pastors:**

In this module we look at the Bible's teaching concerning the spiritual responsibilities of church leaders as "shepherds of the flock"; and practical recommendations on how to respond to an accusation of witchcraft made against a child.

6. **The Child in the Community:**

By the end of this module the participants will have a better understanding of the role of the community in child protection and in preventing accusations of witchcraft made against children.

7. **Child Rights and the Role of the Law in the Protection of Children:**

By the end of the module, the participants will have a better understanding of the legal context of children's rights, notably...

- an awareness of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (AACRWC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and national laws which govern child protection;
- how to promote child protection in our churches and our communities.

The Facilitator's Role

Here we offer some guidance to the facilitator on how to run the course in the most effective way to ensure the participants get the full benefit from the learning experience. We recommend that the facilitator has at least one assistant to help them during the running of the course.

Prior to running this course, the facilitator needs to become familiar with all the course content. Equally, the facilitator needs to keep in mind that for many participants, this may be the first time they have had opportunity to engage with these topics in an open discussion and to raise questions.

Child Protection: It is essential to keep in mind the wider context of safeguarding children, both within the church, and as far as possible in the wider community where the church is situated and has its influence. The desire to keep children safe from harm should be (or become over the course of this training) a common value for all who are participating.

Key Learning: Each module in the course has specific objectives which together fulfil the overall course intent. Part of the facilitator's role is to draw out and reinforce the key learning points. Hence the facilitator should carefully prepare for each module in advance, to establish clearly in mind how best to highlight and emphasise the key points.

Focus and Direction: Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to skilfully guide any discussion times to ensure the message is not lost amid competing viewpoints or diversions. It is important not to allow an activity to be derailed and participants distracted with endless debate between opposing viewpoints. This will require some skill and careful mediation. At times it may be better to acknowledge that some people may differ in beliefs, but even so, our actions towards children should always be kind and compassionate, not violent and abusive.

Pastoral Sensitivity: Many of the participants may have had first-hand experience of the issues being discussed, and for some there may be painful memories or raw emotions associated with these experiences. The facilitator needs to be conscious of this, aware that some activities may provoke strong reactions. Avoid pressurising participants into engaging or sharing in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or upset.

If possible, create a safe space aside from the main course forum where a trusted leader can counsel participants or offer prayer with individuals, as appropriate.

How to...

Here we highlight some practical details for running the course that the facilitator will need to consider.

Number of Participants

Firstly, the course is not a series of lectures! It is very dynamic and interactive, and all the attendees are actively involved in the learning process. For this reason, we recommend that the total number of people attending the course be limited to between 20 and a maximum of 40 on any one occasion. When dividing into groups for discussion, about seven to eight persons per group is optimum, ten maximum. Any more than this and some people will not actively participate in the group discussions.

Venue and Timing

Ensure you have plenty of space in a well ventilated room for all the activities. Some of the activities (games, sketches, role plays, and so on) will require people to move around. Make sure you have some wall space to display any charts, diagrams, and written responses for all to see.

Also ensure you provide sufficient break times during the course, as spending the whole time focused on the course material can be quite intense. You may like to provide some light refreshments.

Each activity in the course has a suggested timing. It is vital to keep track of time, and ensure the workshop progresses at a healthy pace. This will ensure that participants remain engaged, and also that all the material is covered within the timeframe.

Module Structure

Each module contains the following sections:

- **Before the Workshop:** This indicates items that need to be prepared in advance of the day for the activities to be run. Make sure you have done all these before you begin.
- **Prayer and Worship:** Each day, begin with some worship songs and a prayer. This will set the learning time within the context of Christian spiritual life and the fellowship of the Christian community. You can invite a few trusted attendees to lead in worship and prayer if you prefer.
- **Opening:** In the first module this is a welcome with an opportunity for all the attendees to get to know each other (briefly! Don't allow participants to speak for more than two or three minutes each). In all the other modules the opening activity is to recap the learning from the previous modules.
- **Activities:** There are a variety of activities (such as games, discussion groups, role plays) used throughout the course to encourage the participants to engage with the topics and interact with each other. This improves the opportunities for understanding and learning.

The Heart of the Matter

- **Closing:** Here the purpose is to ask the participants to reflect on what they have learnt. This reinforces the learning, and enables them to benefit from each other's insights.
- **Prayer:** Finally, we end each day with prayer.

Preparation

Before each workshop, make sure that you have ready all the necessary materials: for example, flip-chart sheets, markers, scotch tape, sheets of paper (white and different colours, if available), pens or pencils or sticks, inflated balloons, post-it notes, copies of the questionnaire or of bible passages, written on sheets of paper. (A post-it is a piece of paper with a self-adhesive strip. If this kind of supply is not available, pieces of non-adhesive paper will be appropriate. They can be affixed with a piece of scotch tape.)

Activities

Here are some hints on how to run the different activities found in each module during the course...

- **Questionnaires:** The first activity in Module 1 and the last activity in Module 7 are simple questionnaires, clearly labelled. Photocopy the relevant questionnaire in advance, one for each participant. Make sure everyone has a pen, and hand out the questionnaires. Ask participants to find some space to fill these in privately (not to share their answers with their neighbour). Stress that they are anonymous. Collect the forms anonymously using a big box with a slot in the lid for participants to post in their completed questionnaire.
- **Games:** Make sure you have plenty of space for games with no furniture in the way and that you have any additional equipment needed.
- **Study in Groups:** Ensure the groups are not too large or too small. It is helpful to print the verse references and questions on a slip of paper, to save the group from having to write everything down. Encourage all attendees to contribute to the discussions, and don't allow one or two persons to dominate. On each occasion, select one or two different persons to provide feedback on behalf of the group.
- **Drama Activities:** Some activities (such as Sketches, Dialogues, Role Play) require drama. You may ask for volunteers, or select persons to be involved. Encourage animated and expressive acting! However, take care not to insist on a person playing a role if they are not comfortable with it. Remember that some of the material may trigger strong emotional reactions from some attendees, depending on their experiences, so it is important to be sensitive to this.
- **Reading Out Loud:** Some of the activities (such as Stories, Guided Reading, Imagine) require participants to read out loud to everyone. Ensure you have a person who can speak up in a clear measured voice for all to hear.

The Heart of the Matter

- **Writing on the Wall:** Some activities (such as On the Wall, Principles, Feedback) require items to be written on a flip-chart page displayed on the wall. Find a volunteer with clear handwriting to write in big text for all to see. (Using a volunteer each time will keep you free to engage with the course attendees.) These pages, along with other feedback, plus any charts or diagrams, can be left for the participants to read during the break times.
- **All Together:** Even in the activities with everybody together, try to ensure that all the participants are engaged. Invite interaction and draw out responses from those who perhaps do not so naturally promote themselves.

Familiarity with the course material will give you confidence to keep each session running smoothly.

After Module 7 of the Course

In order to gain the maximum benefit from the course, you should do the following immediately.

Personal Action Plans

Provide each participant with a **Personal Action Plan** (provided in the appendices to Module 7) to fill in. It is good to encourage them to commit to taking some practical steps based on the learning they have gained from the course. They should keep this sheet to help them remember and use what they have learned. You do not need to see or copy these sheets, but you should ask them to keep them and tell them that you would like to discuss them with the participants in three / six months / a year's time to find out what progress has been made over the coming months.

Impact Questionnaire

Measuring the impact of the training course is vitally important. You want to know what difference the training has made to the thinking and action of the participants on this issue.

Review the **Questionnaire** responses given in the first activity of the first module. Then review and collate the **Questionnaire** responses given during the last activity of the last module to see if there has been an immediate impact.

Evaluation Process

Follow the Evaluation of Impact process immediately, then after three / six months / one year to find out whether there have been long term changes and whether further training is needed on this topic.

If possible, contact SCWA to let them know what progress has been made as a result of this training. Thank you very much.

Evaluation of Impact

Please note that copies of all the forms are found in the appendices of relevant module, and also in the Evaluation Forms file.

Key Principles

1. Seek to understand whether the training has had a lasting impact. We pray that God will transform attitudes and practices permanently through this training tool. It is worth checking whether it is necessary to repeat the training after a few months, after a year etc. to reinforce positive change and to continue to challenge negative beliefs and practices.
2. If there has been an impact, what is it? On whom? Why? This will require a qualitative description, such as: "What was the situation like before, and what is it like now?"
3. Provide evidence if possible, for example:
 - number of accusations of witchcraft made against children in the church or community before and after the training;
 - comparisons before and after the training, in the form of personal testimonies and detailed descriptions.

Steps to Take

1. Begin with your baseline starting point and immediate impact, as follows: Make a direct comparison between the **Questionnaire** responses given in the first activity of the first module, and the **Questionnaire** responses given during the last activity of the last module. In addition to this, you may also have other baseline indicators to note down (statistics, descriptions etc.). The responses on post-it notes at end of each module will give you some immediate indicators of initial attitudes and also of changes through the course.
2. Encourage the participants to fill in and keep a **Personal Action Plan** (provided in the appendices to Module 7). Explain that you propose to contact them in three months / six months / a year to find out how they have put their plan into action and what the results have been. We are all instruments of positive change!
3. Immediately at the end of the training, ask the **Initial Evaluation Questions**. Note the answers on the form given (see below).

The Heart of the Matter

4. After the planned period of time (three months, six months, one year), contact the participants again and ask them the **Follow-on Evaluation Questions** about their actions since the training and the changes that their actions have brought about. Note the answers on the form given (see below).
5. After a further three months / six months / one year, repeat the **Follow-on Evaluation Questions** with the participants. This will give you a longer term perspective.
6. Prepare a report with this detailed evidence of transformation and use it:
 - to raise awareness;
 - to encourage others to take action;
 - to advocate with the authorities;
 - to raise funds;
 - to meet the requirements of funders for evidence of impact etc.;
 - to decide whether further training is needed.
7. Where there has been very little impact, it is worth looking back at the training given. Does anything need to be changed? If so, how? Is further training needed to reach the goal of transformed attitudes and practices?

If possible, contact SCWA to let them know what progress has been made as a result of this training. Thank you very much.

Contact Details

info@stop-cwa.org

Initial Evaluation Questions

Questions for the facilitator to ask the participants immediately after the training:

1. What have you learnt from this training? – 3 to 5 things per person
2. What will you do differently in the future as a result of this training? – 3 to 5 things per person
3. How will you share what you have learnt with other people?

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Note the responses. Continue on another sheet of paper if necessary. Keep these all safe for future reference, and to compare with the **Follow-On Evaluation Questions**.

Follow-On Evaluation Questions

Questions for the facilitator to ask the participants after 3 months / 6 months / 1 year:

1. Did you make a **Personal Action Plan** after the training? – YES or NO.
 - if YES, what have you been able to put into practice? How have you done this?
 - if NO, what have you done differently in the light of the training you received? What changes have you put in place?
2. What changes have you noticed since the training? Please include any statistics and specific testimonies. Why do you think these changes are linked to the training?
 - changes personally;
 - changes in your church;
 - changes in your community.
3. What do you plan to do over the next six months or year to bring about further change, or to reinforce and build upon these changes? – Mention 2 or 3 things, if possible.

Note the responses. Continue on another sheet of paper if necessary. Keep these all safe for future reference. Compare these responses with the responses to the **Initial Evaluation Questions**.